



WHAT SHOULD DIVORCING PARENTS TELL A SCHOOLTEACHER ABOUT THE SITUATION

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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When a couple divorces, many times they try to keep it quiet. It might be they are embarrassed or feel it is their private business. More than likely though, they are so overwhelmed with the many decisions, they don't think about telling other people.

A lot of times schoolteachers or childcare teachers are the last to know. Many parents just don't think about alerting these people. Schoolteachers and childcare staff are the very people that need to know because they are the ones a child spends the most time with when away from home.

If you are a children's minister how can you help the single parent know what to tell the child's teachers about the divorce?

- First of all it is very important for the teachers to know and understand the family situation. This is especially true with the start of the new school year.
- If a parent has experienced a separation over the summer, the parent needs to meet with the teacher as close to the start of the school year as possible. If the family has been divorced for a while, the parent still needs to meet with the child's main teacher shortly after the start of the school year.
- The parent doesn't need to tell all the sordid details about the family breakup.
- Encourage the parent to talk about how the divorce is affecting their child. Things that need to be talked about are things such as:
 1. The child is not sleeping well at night
 2. The child is not eating or is eating too much
 3. The child is sad and doesn't seem to have much energy
 4. The child cannot focus on things and forgets things
 5. The child is angry at the world
- Alert the teacher about the living arrangements. Teachers need to know if the child is going to be living in the other home on a regular basis; if there is shared custody; if the child's other parent lives out of town/state.
- Discuss which parent to call in case of an emergency or if a problem arises.





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- Let the teacher know if the child is attending DC4K, DivorceCare for Kids, at your church or at a neighboring church. Explain what DC4K is all about and how having the child in DC4K will benefit the child's education.
- If your church runs DC4K, be sure to send along some brochures with the parent so the teachers at the child's school can become familiar with DC4K and what the child will be learning.

Parents who are just experiencing the separation might need some suggestions about what their child experiences in church groups and classes. Before the parent meets with the teacher, it might be good to make up a short list of what you are seeing in your groups at church. Push the positive in your comments.

Example: "Latisha has been distracted since her dad moved out. However, when she is staring off into space we gently touch her shoulder or call her name and she brings her attention back to the discussion at hand."

Be cautious because you don't want to come across as telling a schoolteacher or childcare staff what to do. You only want to alert them to some of the things you are seeing that the parent might not be observing. Remember the parent is stressed, overwhelmed and does not see the child within the context of a group of kids.

Single parents and their children need your help adjusting. What will you tell the single parent they need to say to the schoolteacher?

Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org. You can find additional articles from Linda on her blog at <http://blog.dc4k.org/>.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).

